GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:310
ANSWERED ON:20.11.2002
FOREIGN MINISTER OVERSEAS TOURS
C. SREENIVAASAN;M.H. AMBAREESH

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the countries visited by him from August, 2002 to November, 2002;

(b) the purpose of these visits;

(c) the outcome of these visits;

(d) whether any bilateral treaties have been signed during these visits; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA)

(a) I visited the following countries during the period mentioned :

(i) Brunei Darussalam (30.07.2002 - 01.08.2002)

(ii) Bhutan (04.08.2002 - 06.08.2002)

(iii) Afghanistan (10.08.2002 - 12.08.2002)

(iv) Nepal (20.08.2002 - 24.08.2002)

(v) Bangladesh (24.08.2002 - 25.08.2002)

(vi) South Africa (01.09.2002 - 04.09.2002)

(vii) U.S.A. (08.09.2002 - 10.09.2002)

(viii) Canada (19.09.2002 - 20.09.2002)

(ix) Malaysia (25.09.2002 - 27.09.2002)

(x) Germany (07.10.2002 - 08.10.2002)

(xi) Denmark (08.10.2002 - 11.10.2002)

(xii) U.K. (12.10.2002 & 30.10.2002 - 01.11.2002)

(xiii) Cambodia (04.11.2002 - 06.11.2002)

(xiv) Laos (06.11.2002 - 08.11.2002)

(xv) Thailand (08.11.2002)

(xvi) Republic of Korea (10.11.2002 - 12.11.2002)

(b) - (e) The information is as follows:

Brunei Darussalam

(b) I visited the country for the annual Ministerial meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences (PMC). The PMC consists of two sets of meetings: ASEAN Ministers` meeting with ASEAN`s ten Dialogue Partners collectively and a set of meetings individually with the Dialogue Partners. India is one of the 10 Dialogue Partners of ASEAN.

(c) Participation at the ARF Ministerial Meeting enabled India to project its views on the important issues of peace and security in the Asia_Pacific region. Participation in the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences was part of the on-going high-level dialogue with ASEAN and has contributed to strengthening India-ASEAN relations in different spheres.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

Bhutan

(b) It was an official visit for bilateral consultations. During the visit, issues of mutual interests and concern were discussed.

(c) The visit has helped in further strengthening India - Bhutan relations and renewed contacts with leadership of Bhutan.

(d) No.

(e) Not applicable

Afghanistan

(b)&(c) The purpose of my visit was to expand and consolidate India-Afghanistan relations, in particular to maintain the existing momentum of intensive political interaction between the two countries. My visit was also aimed at reviewing the state of various India-Afghan bilateral cooperation projects, as well as to understand the nature and extent of Afghan reconstruction requirements. One of the objectives was also to handover the first of the three A300B4 aircraft from Air India to Ariana Afghan Airlines.

During the visit, I met cross section of Afghan leadership, including Mr. Hamid Karzai, President of Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan; Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Foreign Minister; Marshal Fahim, Vice President and Defence Minister and Dr. Yonus Qanooni, Education Minister. I also called on the former King of Afghanistan. I visited Provinces of Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat, where I met the provincial leadership of these areas.

During the visit, I announced an assistance package of US$4 million each for the reconstruction of Habibia School and Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health.

(d) No.

(e) Not applicable.

Nepal

(b) & (c) I attended the 23rd Session of the SAARC Council of Ministers Meeting at Kathmandu from August 20-23. The bilateral visit from August 23-24 renewed the traditionally closed and friendly relations between India and Nepal and was part of the regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

Bangladesh

(b) During this Goodwill visit. I called on Bangladesh Prime Minister, Acting President Jamiruddin Sircar, Leader of Opposition Sheikh Hasina and Finance Minister Mr. Saifur Rahman in addition to holding detailed talks with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister.

(c) This visit forms part of the close political interaction that India promotes with its neighbours including Bangladesh through high level interactions. During the visit, I announced the grant of unilateral tariff concessions on select items of export interest to Bangladesh on 16 product groups consisting of 40 tariff lines.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

South Africa

(b) & (c) I led the Indian delegation attending the World Summit for Sustainable Development held at Johannesburg.A Plan of Implementation and a Political Declaration was adopted by all the countries present at the Summit.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

U.S.A

(b) To continue the process of strengthening India-U.S. relations and to prepare for Prime Minister`s meeting with U.S. President on 12th September 2002 in New York.

(c) The two sides agreed to accelerate the ongoing process of transforming India-U.S. relations.They agreed, in particular, to strengthen the strategic framework of their relationship, further intensify defence cooperation, enhance consultations on international developments in the regional and global contexts and, explore ways to make progress in civilian space, nuclear energy and high-technology cooperation.

d) No.

e) Not applicable.

Canada

(b) To strengthen bilateral relations in all areas.

(c) The two sides agreed to intensify political, economic and cultural cooperation.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos & Thailand

(b) I visited Malaysia in connection with the 3rd meeting of the India-Malaysia Joint Commission.I visited Cambodia and Lao PDR and Thailand as member of PM`s delegation to take part in the First ASEAN-India Summit held in Phnom Penh on 5th November 2002; a bilateral visit to Vientiane [Lao PDR] from 6-8 November, 2002 and transit halt at Bangkok on 8th November, 2002.

(c) During the visits to Malaysia, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand, there were discussions with leadership of these countries which would help in further expanding India`s relations with ASEAN, and the four countries mentioned above.

(d) & (e) The following Agreements were signed in Cambodia & Laos:

Cambodia:

- Trade Agreement;
- Credit Agreement for US $ 10 million;
- MoU between Archeological Survey of India and APSARA Authority for Preservation of Ankor Archeological Park; and
- A non-governmental agreement between IIT, Bombay and Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC).

Laos:

- Agreement on Defence Cooperation.
- Drug Demand Reduction and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Related Matters.
- Agreement on Visa Exemption for Holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports; and
- Agreement for Credit Line for US $ 10 million.

Germany

(b) & (c) During the bilateral visit, I met with German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

Denmark

(b) I accompanied the Prime Minister for the Third India-EU Annual Summit and the Bilateral Summit at PM`s level as a part of the official delegation. I also led the Indian side at the bi-annual India EU Troika Ministerial meeting on 10th October held on the margins of the Summit. Earlier on 8 - 9 October, I participated at the 3rd India EU Business Summit organised jointly by CII, FICCI and Danish Chamber of Commerce.

(c)The 3rd India EU Summit level interactions provided an opportunity to renew our strategic partnership with EU. The bi-annual India-EU Ministerial Troika meeting provided a useful opportunity to sensitise the EU on our principal political and strategic concerns. At the 3rd India EU Business Summit, I delivered the keynote Inaugural address.The bilateral part of the visit provided an impetus to our bilateral and political economic ties.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

U.K.

(b) & (c) I accompanied the Prime Minister to the U.K. for a meeting with U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair on 12 October, 2002.The Indian side reviewed bilateral ties in the context of the implementation of the New Delhi Declaration. Agreed on need to promote economic linkages. Discussions also covered regional and international developments of mutual concern.
I also visited the U.K. from October 30 to November 1, 2002 for a bilateral visit and for Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group Meeting. I held bilateral meetings with U.K. Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, and attended the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group Meeting. Bilateral meeting discussed ways of carrying forward the areas agreed upon by the two Prime Ministers. Commonwealth Meeting decided to continue Pakistan`s suspension from Councils of the Commonwealth.

(c) The Indian side reviewed bilateral ties in the context of the implementation of the New Delhi Declaration. Agreed on need to promote economic linkages. Discussions also covered regional and international developments of mutual concern.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.

Republic of Korea

(b) & (c) I attended the Conference of Community of Democracies held at Seoul.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Not applicable.